

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 EB-07 L-03 IGA-01 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

COME-00 PRS-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /108 W

----- 008930

O R 051228Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7764

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COTONOU 1673

ABIDJAN FOR REDSO

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, DM

SUBJ: KEREKOU'S DECISION TO LAY CORNERSTONE OF COTONOU

BRIDGE/DAM ON NOV 7

REF A. COTONOU 1622 B. ABIDJAN 8701 C. ABIDJAN 7670 D. COTONOU 1532

E. COTONOU 1509 F. ABIDJAN 8499 G. ABIDJAN 8498 H. COTONOU 1487

I. COTONOU 1313

SUMMARY. PRES KEREKOU HAS DECIDED TO LAY CORNERSTONE FOR COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM PROJECT ON NOV 7 AND HE HAS ASKED THAT I DELIVER OPENING SPEECH AT CEREMONY. I HAVE EXPRESSED SURPRISE, NOTED THAT NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS STIPULATED IN AGREE-MENT BETWEEN TWO GOVTS HAVE NOT BEEN COMPLETED WITH RESPECT TO EITHER THE BRIDGE OR THE DAM, AND INDICATED THAT I MUST RESERVE MY ACTION UNTIL RECEIPT OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON. BELIEVE THIS IS ANOTHER ATTEMPT BY KEREKOU TO PUT PISTOL IN OUR RIBS, AND NAIL USG TO A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO BUILD THE BRIDGE EVEN IF NO AMERICAN COMPANY SHOULD SUBMIT AN ACCEPTABLE BID AT SECOND BID OPENING ON DEC 5. MESSAGE BELOW SUMS UP PROJECT AS WELL AS POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND SUGGESTS COURSES OF ACTION. NEED INSTRUCTIONS BY 11AM WASHINGTON TIME THURSDAY, CONFIDENTIAL

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6 NOV. END SUMMARY

1. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL AT FORNMIN CONVOKED ME URGENTLY AT COB YESTERDAY TO INFORM ME PRES KEREKOU'S DECISION TO LAY CORNERSTONE OF COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM FRIDAY MORNING, 7 NOV AT 0930 HOURS, HIS WISH THAT I MAKE THE FIRST SPEECH AT CEREMONY AND HIS NEED FOR TEXT OF MY SPEECH YET YESTERDAY EVENING SO THAT HE COULD HAVE IT BEFORE HIM IN DRAFTING HIS OWN ADDRESS FOR THE OCCASION.

2. I EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT CORNERSTONE SHOULD BE LAID BEFORE COMPLETING NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR BRIDGE AND DAM STIPULATED IN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. I STRESSED IN PARTICULAR THAT DAHOMEAN GOVT HAD NOT YET SATISFIED BASIC CONDITION PRECEDENT OF HAVING AN ACCEPTABLE CONTRACT FOR BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION NOR HAD CONDITIONS PRECEDENT FOR COMMENCING WORK ON DAM BEEN FULLY SATISFIED. I NOTED THAT A PUBLIC CEREMONY WOULD INVOLVE PUBLIC ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING OBLIGATIONS AND THAT THE PROCEDURE FOLLOWED IN ALL COUNTRIES WHERE THE USG EXTENDED LOANS, WAS FOR THE TWO GOVTS TO AGREE ON A CEREMONY AFTER ALL THE CONDITIONS PRECEDENT HAD BEEN MET. I INQUIRED WHY THERE WAS SUCH A HURRY. COULD THERE NOT BE A DELAY OF SCHEDULING UNTIL AFTER I HAD HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH MY GOVT? I RECOMMENDED POSTPONEMENT AT LEAST UNTIL AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS COULD BE EFFECTED. IN ANY EVENT, SINCE SOME CONDITIONS PRECEDENT HAD NOT BEEN MET, AND THE PROPOSAL MADE TO ME WAS INCONSISTENT WITH THE USUAL PROCEDURE IN SUCH MATTERS, I HAD PERFORCE TO REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS.

3. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND MY RESERVE IN THE MATTER. HOWEVER, HE WAS ONLY CONVEYING KEREKOU'S "POLITICAL" INSTRUCTIONS. PRESIDENT WISHED TO GET THE PROJECT STARTED ON NOV 7, AND HOPED TO HAVE MY COOPERATION. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHY CORNERSTONE LAYING WAS SO URGENT OR WHY MORE NOTICE WAS NOT GIVEN. HE WAS UNDER IMPRESSION CORNERSTONE WOULD BE LAID AT BRIDGE SITE SINCE, AS HE EXPLAINED, THE PROJECT WAS A "PACKAGE" CENTERING ON A NEW BRIDGE. HE SAID HE WAS NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE ENOUGH, NOR DID HE HAVE THE AUTHORITY, TO ENTER INTO ANY DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER. HE COULD ONLY SERVE AS A CONDUIT. I SAID I WOULD REPORT THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL TO USG WITH REQUEST FOR INSTRUCTIONS WHICH I DID NOT EXPECT TO ARRIVE BEFORE NOV 6.

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4. STATUS OF PROJECT. THE FOLLOWING IS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF STATE OF PLAY RE AID FINANCED BRIDGE AND THE AFDB-FINANCED DAM/RENOVATION OF OLD BRIDGE (REDSO PLEASE CORRECT ANY INACCURACIES).

A. AFDB DAM/OLD BRIDGE. DAHOMEAN GOVT HAS ACCEPTED BID FOR CONSTRUCTION FROM FRENCH FIRM GRANT TRAVAUX DE L'EST

(GTE). AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK HAS APPROVED THIS GTE CONTRACT (ABIDJAN 8701). HOWEVER, WORK CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL REDSO ISSUES IMPLEMENTATION LETTER UNDERTAKING TO CHARGE COSTS OF SUPERVISORY ENGINEERING SERVICES OF SANDERS & THOMAS (S&T) TO THE AID LOAN. AS OF OCT 24 (ABIDJAN 9042) THAT LETTER BEING WITHHELD PENDING OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION FROM AFDB TO REDSO THAT IT APPROVES GTE CONTRACT AND THAT ALL OTHER CONDITIONS TO "EFFECTIVENESS" OF AFDB LOAN HAVE BEEN MET. ONCE NOTIFICATION RECEIVED, REDSO LETTER IS TO BE ISSUED.

B. AID FINANCED BRIDGE. ON OCT 29 WE NOTIFIED REDSO OF DAHOMEAN GOVT APPROVAL OF LAST TWO MODIFICATIONS IN BID DOCUMENTS (RELATIVE TO 20 MILLION CFA ADVANCE TO CONTRACTOR AND REDUCTION OF LIQUIDATED DAMAGES FOR DELAYS IN COMPLETION SEE (COTONOU 1647). UPON RECEIPT OF THAT NOTIFICATION, INVITATIONS TO BID WERE TO BE ISSUED WITH PROJECTED DATE FOR BID OPENING OF DEC 5, 1975. BIDS ARE TO BE EVALUATED BY DEC 12 AND CONTRACT SIGNED BY DEC 27.
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CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

COME-00 PRS-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /108 W

----- 009134

O R 051230Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7765

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 COTONOU 1673

ABIDJAN FOR REDSO

5. COMMENT: EVER SINCE BID OPENING FOR CONSTRUCTION ON AUG 6 SHOWED GOOSE EGG, DAHOMEAN GOVT HAS BEEN USING HARD FISTED TACTICS ON USG, ATTEMPTING TO FORCE US TO DIRECT AN AMERICAN

COMPANY TO START WORK IMMEDIATELY (FOR DETAILS SEE REFS A AND I). I HAVE EXPLAINED TO KEREKOU, FORMIN ALLADAYE AND PUBLIC WORKS MIN AHOUEYA THE INTENSIVE EFFORTS OF USG SINCE AUG 6 TO ENDEAVOR HELP DAHOMEAN GOVT MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD (BY ARRANGING A SECOND ROUND OF BIDS) AND THE NEED TO GIVE PROSPECTIVE BRIDGE CONTRACTORS UNTIL EARLY DEC TO PREPARE AND SUBMIT BIDS. ANY REASONABLE GOVT WOULD HAVE GREETED WITH EXPRESSIONS OF GRATIFICATION THE HELPFUL ACTION OF REDSO IN FINDING A WAY TO FACILITATE COMMENCEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION ON THE DAM (THROUGH WAIVING CONDITIONS PRECEDENT TO ENABLE AID LOAN MONEY TO BE PAID TO S&T FROM BEGINNING OF WORK ON DAM, RATHER THAN ONLY AFTER SIGNATURE OF CONTRACT FOR BRIDGE). HOWEVER DAHOMEAN GOVT IS INSUFFICIENTLY SATISFIED.

6. IN THE OPINION OF THE COUNTRY TEAM, PRES KEREKOU IS TRYING TO STAMPEDE USG INTO A PUBLIC SITUATION THAT INVOLVES NAILING USG WITH OBLIGATION TO BUILD THE BRIDGE WHETHER BIDS ARE RECEIVED ON THE SECOND ROUND OR NOT. HE PROBABLY BELIEVES THAT THE USG DOES NOT INTEND TO GO THROUGH WITH THE PROJECT, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND HE WANTS TO CORNER US. END COMMENT.

7. AS BACKGROUND FOR USG CONSIDERATION OF ACTION IN THIS MATTER, WE SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

A. DAHOMEAN GOVT HAS ALREADY TAKEN PUBLIC POSITION, ANNOUNCED IN DAHO EXPRESS ACCOUNT OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING ON OCT 15, THAT "ALL THE FORMALITIES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND CONSTRUCTION WORK WILL BEGIN AT ONCE" (REF A). KEREKOU IS LIKELY TO CONFIRM THIS POSITION IN HIS CORNERSTONE SPEECH, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE URGE HIM NOT TO.

B. AS SEEN FROM HERE, IT APPEARS POSSIBLE THAT AN ACCEPTABLE BID FOR THE BRIDGE WILL NOT BE RECEIVED, I.E., EITHER NO BIDS WILL BE SUBMITTED, OR THEY WILL BE TOO HIGH. ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION TO KEEP THE PROJECT ALIVE ARE NOT PROMISING. THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT WE WILL END UP HAVING TO DE-OBLIGATE THE LOAN. IT WOULD THEREFORE BE PREFERABLE TO AVOID PUBLIC STATEMENTS ALTOGETHER, OR AT LEAST TO SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE (HERE IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD OF COURSE THAT THE DAHOMEAN MEDIA WILL CARRY ONLY CAREFULLY SELECTED PASSAGES FROM ANY SPEECH I MADE).

C. THERE KEREKOU REGIME IS MOVING THIS COUNTRY RAPIDLY IN THE DIRECTION OF A DRACONIAN COMMUNIST STATE.

D. OWING TO DAHOMEAN GOVT ACTIONS IN PAST FEW MONTHS, OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE BEEN STEADILY WORSENING. WE SEE NO INTENT ON THEIR PART TO SEEK IMPROVEMENT. WE ARE REACHING THE

POINT WHERE OUR POLICY TOWARD DAHOMEY WILL HAVE TO BE RE-ASSESSED.

8. SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS. SUGGEST WE BE INSTRUCTED ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:

A. THAT WE RECOMMEND TO DAHOMEAN GOVT, AS USG POSITION BASED ON INSTRUCTIONS TO ME, THAT CORNERSTONE SHOULD NOT BE LAID UNTIL AFTER ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS CALLED FOR IN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO GOVTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. THIS WOULD BE SOME-TIME AFTER EVALUATION OF BIDS (IF ANY) FOR BRIDGE JOB, AND DTERMINATION IF ANY BID IS ACCEPTABLE (EARLIEST POSSIBLE DAOS CONFIDENTIAL

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WOULD BE DEC 13, THE DAY AFTER COMPLETING EVALUATION OF BIDS). I WOULD SAY IT IS CUSTOMARY IN ALL CASES OF LOAN AGREEMENTS NOT TO HAVE PUBLIC CEREMONEYUNTIL ALL CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN FINALIZED, SINCE PUBLIC CEREMONEY IMPLIES THAT EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER, AND PUBLIC COULD INCORRECTLY INFER THAT OBLIGATIONS HAVE BEEN ASSUMED.

B. IF AS WE EXPECT DAHOMEAN GOVT REFUSED TO ACCEPT POSITION (A) ON GROUND IT WANTS TO MOVE AHEAD ON DAM AND RECONSTRUCTION OF OLD BRIDGE (WHICH REDSO IS ENDEAVORING TO FACILITATE), WE AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN CEREMONY ONLY SUBSEQUENT TO AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK'S NOTIFICATION OF APPROVAL OF DAM CONTRACT TO REDSO AND LATTER'S ISSUANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION LETTER TO DAHOMEAN GOVT FOR SERVICES OF S&T. CONDITION ON OUR SIDE WOULD BE THAT IT BE MADE PUBLICLY CLEAR THAT ONLY THE WORK ON THE DAM COULD COMMENCE AT EARLY DATE, AND THAT CONSTRUCTION ON BRIDGE MUST AWAIT CONCLUSION OF ACCEPTABLY CONTRACT WITH A SUCCESSFUL AMERICAN COMPANY BIDDER. IF KEREKOU IS UNWILLING TO STATE THE FACTS IN HIS SPEECH, I WOULD STATE THEM IN MINE (IT IS DOUBTFUL I COULD GET OUT OF MAKING A FEW REMARKS WITHOUT BEING CHARGED WITH SABOTAGING THE WHOLE PROJECT). WE PREPARING TEXT OF POSSIBLE SPEECH AND WILL REPEAT SEPTTEL BY TOMORROW, FOR DEPT'S CONSIDERATION.

9. UPON RECEIPT OF INSTRUCTIONS, I WILL SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH FORNMIN OR PRES, TO ENDEAVOR TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER SATISFACTORILY.

10. ACTION RECOMMENDED:

A. FOR REDSO: WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS, HOWEVER BRIEF, ALSO REPEATED TO DEPT, BY MID DAY TOMORROW NOV 6 (BY IMMEDIATE PRECEDENCE BUT NOT BY NIACT). WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL TO HAVE FURTHER AMMUNITION AGAINST PRECIPITOUS CORNERSTONE LAYING, ALSO TECHNICAL ADVICE. REDSO SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT WE HAVE BEEN WITHOUT AIDOFF SINCE

OCT 24 AND SINGER WILL NOT GET BACK FROM THREE-MONTH LEAVE
UNTIL NOV 9.

B. FOR STATE: NEED INSTRUCTIONS TO ARRIVE COTONOU BY 1700 LOCAL
TIME THURSDAY 6 NOV (11AM WASHINGTON TIME).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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